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# A CHANT OF LOVE FOR ENGLAND

## AND OTHER POEMS

# A CHANT OF LOVE FOR ENGLAND

## AND OTHER POEMS

BY

HELEN GRAY CONE

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LONDON AND TORONTO
J. M. DENT & SONS LTD.
1915

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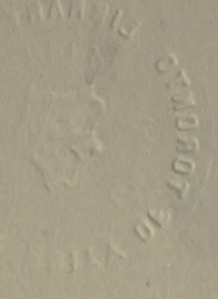

## In Memoriam

### P. M. and A. C. D.

KILLED IN ACTION, 1915

Let Pride with Grief go hand in hand:
  They join the hallowed hosts who died
In battle for their lovely land;
  With light about their brows they ride.

Young hearts and hot, gray heads and wise,
  Good knights of all the years foregone,
Faith in their England in their eyes,
  Still ride they on, still ride they on!

By altars old their banners fade
  Beneath dear spires; their names are set
In minster aisle, in yew-tree shade;
  Their memories fight for England yet.

Let Pride with Grief go hand in hand,
  Sad Love with Patience, side by side;
In battle for their lovely land
  Not vainly England's sons have died!

And well may pride this hour befit;
  For not since England's days began
More fiery-clear the word was writ:
  Who dies for England, dies for Man!

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## A CHANT OF LOVE FOR ENGLAND

A SONG of hate is a song of Hell ;
Some there be that sing it well.
Let them sing it loud and long,
We lift our hearts in a loftier song :
We lift our hearts to Heaven above,
Singing the glory of her we love,—
*England !*

Glory of thought and glory of deed,
Glory of Hampden and Runnymede ;
Glory of ships that sought far goals,
Glory of swords and glory of souls !
Glory of songs mounting as birds,
Glory immortal of magical words ;
Glory of Milton, glory of Nelson,
Tragical glory of Gordon and Scott ;
Glory of Shelley, glory of Sidney,
Glory transcendent that perishes not,—
Hers is the story, hers be the glory,
*England !*

Shatter her beauteous breast ye may ;
The Spirit of England none can slay !
Dash the bomb on the dome of Paul's,—
Deem ye the fame of the Admiral falls ?

Pry the stone from the chancel floor,—
Dream ye that Shakespeare shall live no more?
Where is the giant shot that kills
Wordsworth walking the old green hills?
Trample the red rose on the ground,—
Keats is Beauty while earth spins round!
Bind her, grind her, burn her with fire,
Cast her ashes into the sea,—
She shall escape, she shall aspire,
She shall arise to make men free:
She shall arise in a sacred scorn,
Lighting the lives that are yet unborn;
Spirit supernal, Splendour eternal,
ENGLAND!

## SOLDIERS OF THE LIGHT

" WHY of War, O thou that lovest rather
Peace of roses in a rain-sweet garden,
Peace of moonlit silver-heaving waters,
All the lovely looks of little children?
What strange mandate
Bids thee sing of War, who lovest these things?

" How of War, O faint-heart, thou that grievest
Over every gentle creature wounded,
All soft eyes of pain and puzzled sorrow,
All the lithe limbs marred, the wild wings broken?
What black magic
Makes thee brood on War, who dreadest these things?

" Is it but the haunting of the bugles,
Floating memories of the war-time bugles
Blowing over those far fields of childhood,
Pleasant in the foolish ear of childhood,
When the sword-hilt
Seemed but made to shine and hold a jewel?"

Then the inward Voice that gave the mandate,—
Bade me sing of battle,—bade me answer:
Well I know the symbol of the sword-hilt,

Know the Cross of sacrifice and service ;
    See the heart's-blood
Burning where the child beheld the jewel.

I have hated with the perfect hatred
All the work of Hell in all the ages ;
Hated all the hate and all the horror ;
Yet the Vision of the Face of faces,
    God-in-Manhood,
Shines through Hell, and I have seen the Vision.

In all battles, under many banners,
Soldiers of the Light have fought, have fallen,
Souls elect and armoured all with honour,
Following an unconquerable Captain ;
    Fighting, falling,
For the hope, the dream, the splendid secret !

In this rubric, lo, the Past is lettered :
Strike the red words out, we strike the glory.
Leave the sacred colour on the pages,
Pages of the Past that teach the Future.
    On that scripture
Yet shall young souls take the oath of service.

God end War ! but when brute War is ended,
Yet there shall be many a noble soldier,
Many a noble battle worth the winning,
Many a hopeless battle worth the losing.
    Life is battle,
Life is battle, even to the sunset.

Soldiers of the Light shall strive forever,
In the wards of pain, the ways of labour,
In the stony deserts of the city,
In the hives where greed has housed the helpless ;
    Patient, valiant,
Fighting with the powers of death and darkness.

Make us mingle in that heavenly warfare ;
Call us through the throats of all brave bugles
Blown on fields foregone by lips forgotten ;
Nerve us with the courage of lost comrades,
    Gird us, lead us,
Thou, O Prince of Peace and God of Battles !

## THE STORY OF THE "ORIENT"

'Twas a pleasant Sunday morning while the spring
was in its glory,
English spring of gentle glory; smoking by his
cottage door,
Florid-faced, the man-o'-war's-man told his white-
head boy the story,
Noble story of Aboukir told a hundred times before.

"Here, the *Theseus*—here, the *Vanguard;*" as
he spoke each name sonorous,—
*Minotaur, Defence, Majestic,* stanch old comrades
of the brine,
That against the ships of Brueys made their broad-
sides roar in chorus,—
Ranging daisies on his doorstone, deft he mapped
the battle-line.

Mapped the curve of tall three-deckers, deft as
might a man left-handed,
Who had given an arm to England later on at
Trafalgar.
While he poured the praise of Nelson to the child
with eyes expanded,
Bright athwart his honest forehead blushed the
scarlet cutlass-scar.

For he served aboard the *Vanguard*, saw the
Admiral blind and bleeding
Borne below by silent sailors, borne to die as then
they deemed.
Every stout heart sick but stubborn, fought the
sea-dogs on unheeding,
Guns were cleared and manned and cleared, the
battle thundered, flashed, and screamed.

Till a cry swelled loud and louder,—towered on
fire the *Orient* stately,
Brueys' flag-ship, she that carried guns a hundred
and a score;
Then came groping up the hatchway he they
counted dead but lately,
Came the little one-armed Admiral to guide the
fight once more.

"'Lower the boats!' was Nelson's order."—
But the listening boy beside him,
Who had followed all his motions with an eager
wide blue eye,
Nursed upon the name of Nelson till he half had
deified him,
Here, with childhood's crude consistence, broke
the tale to question "Why?"

For by children facts go streaming in a throng
that never pauses,
Noted not, till, of a sudden, thought, a sunbeam,
gilds the motes.

All at once the known words quicken, and the child
would deal with causes.
Since to kill the French was righteous, why bade
Nelson lower the boats?

Quick the man put by the question. "But the
*Orient*, none could save her;
We could see the ships, the ensigns, clear as day-
light by the flare;
And a many leaped and left her; but, God rest
'em! some were braver;
Some held by her, firing steady till she blew to God
knows where."

At the shock, he said, the *Vanguard* shook through
all her timbers oaken;
It was like the shock of Doomsday,—not a tar but
shuddered hard.
All was hushed for one strange moment; then that
awful calm was broken
By the heavy plash that answered the descent of
mast and yard.

So, her cannon still defying, and her colours
flaming, flying,
In her pit her wounded helpless, on her deck her
Admiral dead,
Soared the *Orient* into darkness with her living
and her dying:
"Yet our lads made shift to rescue three-score
souls," the seaman said.

Long the boy with knit brows wondered o'er that
friending of the foeman;
Long the man with shut lips pondered; powerless
he to tell the cause
Why the brother in his bosom that desired the
death of no man,
In the crash of battle wakened, snapped the bonds
of hate like straws.

While he mused, his toddling maiden drew the
daisies to a posy;
Mild the bells of Sunday morning rang across the
churchyard sod;
And helped on by tender hands, with sturdy feet
all bare and rosy,
Climbed his babe to mother's breast, as climbs the
slow world up to God.

## POVERTY ROW

Brave old neighbours in Poverty Row,
  Why should we grudge to dwell with you?
Pinch of poverty well ye know—
  Doubtful dinner and clouted shoe.
Grinned the wolf at your doors, and yet
  You sang your songs and you said your say.
Lashed to labour by devil Debt,
  All were manful, and some were gay.

What, old Chaucer! a royal jest
  Once you made in your laughing verse:
"No more goldfinch-song in the nest—
  Autumn nest of the empty purse!"
Master Spenser, your looks are spare;
  Princes' favours, how fleet they be!
Thinking that yours was the selfsame fare,
  Crust or crumb shall be sweet to me.

Worshipful Shakespeare of Stratford town,
  Prosperous-portly in doublet red,
What of the days when you first came down
  To London city to earn your bread?
What of the lodging where Juliet's face
  Startled your dream with its southern glow,
Flooding with splendour the sordid place?
  That was a garret in Poverty Row!

Many a worthy has here, I ween,
Made brief sojourn or long abode :
Johnson, dining behind the screen ;
Goldsmith, vagrant along the road ;
Keats, ah, pitiful ! poor and ill,
Harassed and hurt, in his short spring day ;
Best Sir Walter, with flagging quill
Digging the mountain of debt away.

Needy comrade, whose evil star,
Pallid-frowning, decrees you wrong,
Greatly neighboured, in truth, we are ;
Hold your heart up and sing your song !
Lift your eyes to the book-shelf where,
Glorious-gilded, a shining show,
Every man in his mansion fair,
Dwell the princes of Poverty Row !

## THE TRUMPETER

Two ships, alone in sky and sea,
  Hang clinched, with crash and roar;
There is but one—whiche'er it be—
  Will ever come to shore.

And will it be the grim black bulk,
  That towers so evil now?
Or will it be The Grace of God,
  With the angel at her prow?

The man that breathes the battle's breath
  May live at last to know;
But the trumpeter lies sick to death
  In the stifling dark below.

He hears the fight above him rave;
  He fears his mates must yield;
He lies as in a narrow grave
  Beneath a battle-field.

His fate will fall before the ship's,
  Whate'er the ship betide ;
He lifts the trumpet to his lips
  As though he kissed a bride.

" Now blow thy best, blow thy last,
  My trumpet, for the Right ! "—
He has sent his soul in one strong blast,
  To hearten them that fight.

## GREENCASTLE JENNY

### A BALLAD OF 'SIXTY-THREE

Oh, Greencastle streets were a stream of steel
With the slanted muskets the soldiers bore,
And the scared earth muttered and shook to feel
The tramp and the rumble of Longstreet's Corps ;
The bands were blaring " The Bonny Blue Flag,"
And the banners borne were a motley many ;
And watching the gray column wind and drag
Was a slip of a girl—we'll call her Jenny.

A slip of a girl—what needs her name ?—
With her cheeks aflame and her lips aquiver,
As she leaned and looked with a loyal shame
At the steady flow of the steely river :
Till a storm grew black in the hazel eyes
Time had not tamed, nor a lover sighed for ;
And she ran and she girded her, apron-wise,
With the flag she loved and her brothers died for.

Out of the doorway they saw her start,
(Pickett's Virginians were marching through,)
The hot little foolish hero-heart
Armoured with stars and the sacred blue.

Clutching the folds of red and white
  Stood she and bearded those ranks of theirs,
Shouting shrilly with all her might,
  " Come and take it, the man that dares ! "

Pickett's Virginians were passing through ;
  Supple as steel and brown as leather,
Rusty and dusty of hat and shoe,
  Wonted to hunger and war and weather ;
Peerless, fearless, an army's flower !
  Sterner soldiers the world saw never,
Marching lightly, that summer hour,
  To death and failure and fame forever.

Rose from the rippling ranks a cheer ;
  Pickett saluted, with bold eyes beaming,
Sweeping his cap like a cavalier,
  With his lion locks in the warm wind streaming.
Fierce little Jenny ! her courage fell,
  As the firm lines flickered with friendly laughter,
And Greencastle streets gave back the yell
  That Gettysburg slopes gave back soon after.

So they cheered for the flag they fought
  With the generous glow of the stubborn fighter,
Loving the brave as the brave man ought,
  And never a finger was raised to fright her :
So they marched, though they knew it not,
  Through the fresh green June to the shock infernal,
To the hell of the shell and the plunging shot,
  And the charge that has won them a name eternal.

And she felt at last, as she hid her face,
There had lain at the root of her childish daring
A trust in the men of her own brave race,
And a secret faith in the foe's forbearing.
And she sobbed, till the roll of the rumbling gun
And the swinging tramp of the marching men
Were a memory only, and day was done,
And the stars in the fold of the blue again.

(*Thank God that the day of the sword is done,*
*And the stars in the fold of the blue again!*)

## BY THE BLOCKHOUSE ON THE HILL

### A BALLAD OF 'NINETY-EIGHT

THE soul of the fair young man sprang up
From the earth where his body lay,
And he was aware of a grim dark soul
Companioning his way.

"Who are you, brother?" the fair soul said;
"We wing together still!"
And the soul replied, that was swart and red,
"The spirit of him who shot you dead
By the blockhouse on the hill.

"Your men and you on the crest were first,
And the last foe left was I;
In the crackle of rifles I dropped and cursed,
Lightning-struck as the cheer outburst
And the hot charge panted nigh.

"You saw me writhe at the side of the trench:
You bade—I know not what:
With one last gnash, with one last wrench,
I sped my last, sure shot.

" The thing that lies on the sodden ground
  Like a wrack of the whirlwind's track,
Your men have made of the body of me,—
  But they could not call you back !

" In that black game I won, I won !
  But had you worked your will,
Speak now the shame that you would have done
  By the blockhouse on the hill ! "

" God judge my men ! " said the fair young soul ;
  " He knows you tried them sore.
Had He given me power to bide an hour
  I had wrought that they forbore.

" I bade them, ere your bullet brought
  This swift, this sweet release,
To bear your body out of the fire
  That you might pass in peace."

Said the grim dark soul, " Farewell, farewell,
  Farewell 'twixt you and me,
Till they set red Judas loose from hell
  To kneel at the Lord Christ's knee ! "

" Not so, not so," said the fair young soul,
  " But reach me out your hand :
We two will kneel at the Lord Christ's knee,
And He that was hanged on the cruel tree
  Will remember and understand.

" We two will pray at the Lord Christ's knee
  That never on earth again
The breath of the hot brute guns shall cloud
  The sight in the eyes of men ! "

The clean stars came into the sky ;
  The perfect night was still ;
Yet rose to heaven the old blood-cry,
  By the blockhouse on the hill.

## THE HOUSE OF HATE

MINE enemy builded well, with the soft blue hills in sight;
But betwixt his house and the hills I builded a house for spite:
And the name thereof I set in the stone-work over the gate,
With a carving of bats and apes; and I called it the House of Hate.

And the front was alive with masks of malice and of despair;
Horned demons that leered in stone, and women with serpent hair;
That whenever his glance would rest on the soft hills far and blue,
It must fall on mine evil work, and my hatred should pierce him through.

And I said, "I will dwell herein, for beholding my heart's desire
On my foe"; and I knelt, and fain had brightened the hearth with fire;
But the brands they would hiss and die, as with curses a strangled man,
And the hearth was cold from the day that the House of Hate began.

And I called at the open door, " Make ye merry,
all friends of mine,
In the hall of my House of Hate, where is plentiful
store and wine.
We will drink unhealth together unto him I have
foiled and fooled ! "
And they stared and they passed me by ; but I
scorned to be thereby schooled.

And I ordered my board for feast ; and I drank, in
the topmost seat,
Choice grape from a curious cup ; and the first
it was wonder-sweet ;
But the second was bitter indeed, and the third
was bitter and black,
And the gloom of the grave came on me, and I cast
the cup to wrack.

Alone, I was stark alone, and the shadows were
each a fear ;
And thinly I laughed, but once, for the echoes were
strange to hear ;
And the wind in the hallways howled as a green-
eyed wolf might cry,
And I heard my heart : I must look on the face of
a man, or die !

So I crept to my mirrored face, and I looked, and
I saw it grown
(By the light in my shaking hand) to the like of the
masks of stone ;

And with horror I shrieked aloud as I flung my
torch and fled,
And a fire-snake writhed where it fell; and at
midnight the sky was red.

And at morn, when the House of Hate was a ruin,
despoiled of flame,
I fell at mine enemy's feet, and besought him to
slay my shame;
But he looked in mine eyes and smiled, and his
eyes were calm and great:
"You rave, or have dreamed," he said; "I saw
not your House of Hate."

## THE RIDDLE OF WRECK

DARK hemlocks, seventy and seven,
High on the hill-slope sigh in dream,
With plumy heads in heaven ;
They silver the sunbeam.

One broken body of a tree,
Stabbed through and slashed by lightning keen,
Unsouled, and grim to see,
Hangs o'er the hushed ravine.

A hundred masts, a hundred more,
Crowd close against the sunset-fires.
Their late adventure o'er,
They mingle with the spires.

But one is lying prone, alone,
Where gleaming gulls to seaward sweep,
White sand of burial blown
In sheets about its sleep.

When lightning's leashed, and sea is still,
Ye sacrificial mysteries dread,
Scapegoats of shore and hill,
Your riddle may be read.

## THE RIDE TO THE LADY

" Now since mine even is come at last,—
For I have been the sport of steel,
And hot life ebbeth from me fast,
And I in saddle roll and reel,—
Come bind me, bind me on my steed !
Of fingering leech I have no need ! "
The chaplain clasped his mailèd knee.
" Nor need I more thy whine and thee !
No time is left my sins to tell ;
But look ye bind me, bind me well ! "
They bound him strong with leathern thong,
For the ride to the lady should be long.

Day was dying ; the poplars fled,
Thin as ghosts, on a sky blood-red ;
Out of the sky the fierce hue fell,
And made the streams as the streams of hell.
All his thoughts as a river flowed,
Flowed aflame as fleet he rode,
Onward flowed to her abode,
Ceased at her feet, mirrored her face.
(Viewless Death apace, apace,
Rode behind him in that race.)

" Face, mine own, mine alone,
Trembling lips my lips have known,
Birdlike stir of the dove-soft eyne
Under the kisses that make them mine !
Only of thee, of thee, my need !
Only to thee, to thee, I speed ! "
The Cross flashed by at the highway's turn ;
In a beam of the moon the Face shone stern.

Far behind had the fight's din died ;
The shuddering stars in the welkin wide
Crowded, crowded, to see him ride.
The beating hearts of the stars aloof
Kept time to the beat of the horse's hoof.
" What is the throb that thrills so sweet ?
Heart of my lady, I feel it beat ! "
But his own strong pulse the fainter fell,
Like the failing tongue of a hushing bell.
The flank of the great-limbed steed was wet
Not alone with the started sweat.

Fast, and fast, and the thick black wood
Arched its cowl like a black friar's hood ;
Fast, and fast, and they plunged therein,—
But the viewless rider rode to win.

Out of the wood to the highway's light
Galloped the great-limbed steed in fright ;
The mail clashed cold, and the sad owl cried,
And the weight of the dead oppressed his side.

Fast, and fast, by the road he knew ;
And slow, and slow, the stars withdrew ;
And the waiting heaven turned weirdly blue,
As a garment worn of a wizard grim.
He neighed at the gate in the morning dim.

She heard no sound before her gate,
Though very quiet was her bower.
All was as her hand had left it late :
The needle slept on the broidered vine,
Where the hammer and spikes of the passion-flower
Her fashioning did wait.
On the couch lay something fair,
With steadfast lips and veilèd eyne ;
But the lady was not there.
On the wings of shrift and prayer,
Pure as winds that winnow snow,
Her soul had risen twelve hours ago.
The burdened steed at the barred gate stood,
No whit the nearer to his goal.
Now God's great grace assoil the soul
That went out in the wood !

## THE GAOLER

To be free, to be alone,
Is a joy that I have not known.

To a keeper who never sleeps
I was given at the hour of birth
By the governors of earth ;
And so well his watch he keeps,
Though I leave no sleight untried,
That he will not quit my side.

How often, in bygone years,
I have passioned, and sworn with tears
That I loathed him and all his ways !
He is silent ; he smiles ; he stays.

When I close my eyes at night,
His face is my latest sight.
That dark face is mine own !
He walks in my dreams at will ;
When I wake, he is with me still.
To be free, to be alone,
Is a joy that I have not known.

I have cried to the winds, the sea,
" Oh, help me, for ye are free ! "
I have thought to escape away,
But his hand on my shoulder lay.

From the hills and the lifting stars
He has borne me back to bars ;
With the spell of my murmured name
He has captived and kept me tame.

It is whispered that he and I
In a single hour shall die,
As we were born, 't is said.
I shall lie in selfless peace ;
For him, too, is surcease,
Rest, and a quiet bed.
Self bindeth not the dead.

Somewhat otherwise I believe ;
For a hope is astir in me
That when consciousness one day fills
With a splendour I scarce conceive,—
More than the winds and sea,
More than the stars and hills,—
I indeed shall escape away
Forever in that great day ;
I shall have no heed to give
Unto aught that would call me back :
He shall pass like the sunrise rack,
He shall vanish ; but I shall live !

## THE FIRST GUEST

When the house is finished, Death enters.
*Eastern Proverb.*

LIFE'S House being ready all,
Each chamber fair and dumb,
Ere Life, the Lord, is come
With pomp into his hall,—
Ere Toil has trod the floors,
Ere Love has lit the fires,
Or young great-eyed Desires
Have, timid, tried the doors;
Or from east-window leaned
One Hope, to greet the sun,
Or one gray Sorrow screened
Her sight against the west,—
Then enters the first guest,
The House of Life being done.

He waits there in the shade.
I deem he is Life's twin,
For whom the House was made.
Whatever his true name,
Be sure, to enter in
He has both key and claim.

The daybeams, free of fear,
Creep drowsy toward his feet;

His heart were heard to beat,
Were any there to hear ;
Ah, not for ends malign,
Like wild thing crouched in lair,
Or watcher of a snare,
But with a friend's design
He lurks in shadow there !

He goes not to the gates
To welcome any other,
Nay, not Lord Life, his brother ;
But still his hour awaits
Each several guest to find
Alone, yea, quite alone ;
Pacing with pensive mind
The cloister's echoing stone,
Or singing, unaware,
At the turning of the stair.
'T is truth, though we forget,
In Life's House enters none
Who shall that seeker shun,
Who shall not so be met.
" Is this mine hour ? " each saith.
" So be it, gentle Death ! "
Each has his way to end,
Encountering this friend.
Griefs die to memories mild ;
Hope turns a weanèd child ;
Love shines a spirit white,
With eyes of deepened light.
When many a guest has passed,

Some day 't is Life's at last
To front the face of Death.
Then, casements closed, men say :
" Lord Life is gone away ;
He went, we trust and pray,
To God, who gave him breath."
Beginning, End, He is :
Are not these sons both His ?
Lo, these with Him are one !
To phrase it so were best :
God's self is that first Guest,
The House of Life being done !

## ARRAIGNMENT

"Not ye who have stoned, not ye who have smitten us," cry
The sad, great souls, as they go out hence into dark,
"Not ye we accuse, though for you was our passion borne;
And ye we reproach not, who silently passed us by.
We forgive blind eyes and the ears that would not hark,
The careless and causeless hate and the shallow scorn.

"But ye, who have seemed to know us, have seen and heard;
Who have set us at feasts and have crowned with the costly rose;
Who have spread us the purple of praises beneath our feet;
Yet guessed not the word that we spake was a living word,
Applauding the sound,—we account you as worse than foes!
We sobbed you our message; ye said, 'It is song, and sweet!'"

## A RESURRECTION

*Neither would they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*

I WAS quick in the flesh, was warm, and the live heart shook my breast :
In the market I bought and sold, in the temple I bowed my head.
I had swathed me in shows and forms, and was honoured above the rest
For the sake of the life I lived ; nor did any esteem me dead.

But at last, when the hour was ripe—was it sudden-remembered word ?
Was it sight of a bird that mounted, or sound of a strain that stole ?
I was ware of a spell that snapped, of an inward strength that stirred,
Of a Presence that filled that place ; and it shone, and I knew my Soul.

And the dream I had called my life was a garment about my feet,
For the web of the years was rent with the throe of a yearning strong.
With a sweep as of winds in heaven, with a rush as of flames that meet,
The Flesh and the Spirit clasped ; and I cried, " Was I dead so long ? "

I had glimpse of the Secret, flashed through the
symbol obscure and mean,
And I felt as a fire what erst I repeated with lips
of clay;
And I knew for the things eternal the things eye
hath not seen;
Yea, the heavens and the earth shall pass; but
they never shall pass away.

And the miracle on me wrought, in the streets I
would straight make known:
"When this marvel of mine is heard, without
cavil shall men receive
Any legend of haloed saint, starting up through the
sealèd stone!"
So I spake in the trodden ways; but behold,
there would none believe!

## THE GLORIOUS COMPANY

" Faces, faces, faces of the streaming marching surge,
Streaming on the weary road, toward the awful steep,
Whence your glow and glory, as ye set to that sharp verge,
Faces lit as sunlit stars, shining as ye sweep?

" Whence this wondrous radiance that ye somehow catch and cast,
Faces rapt, that one discerns mid the dusky press
Herding in dull wonder, gathering fearful to the Vast?
Surely all is dark before, night of nothingness ! "

*Lo, the Light !* (they answer) *O the pure, the pulsing Light,*
*Beating like a heart of life, like a heart of love,*
*Soaring, searching, filling all the breadth and depth and height,*
*Welling, whelming with its peace worlds below, above !*

" O my soul, how art thou to that living Splendour blind,
Sick with thy desire to see even as these men see !—
Yet to look upon them is to know that God hath shined :
Faces lit as sunlit stars, be all my light to me ! "

## THE ARROWMAKER

Day in, day out, or sun or rain,
Or sallow leaf, or summer grain,
Beneath a wintry morning moon
Or through red smouldering afternoon,
With simple joy, with careful pride,
He plies the craft he long has plied :
To shape the stave, to set the sting,
To fit the shaft with irised wing ;
And farers by may hear him sing,
For still his door is wide :
" Laugh and sigh, live and die,—
The world swings round ; I know not, I,
If north or south mine arrows fly ! "

And sometimes, while he works, he dreams,
And on his soul a vision gleams :
Some storied field fought long ago,
Where arrows fell as thick as snow.
His breath comes fast, his eyes grow bright,
To think upon that ancient fight.
Oh, leaping from the strainèd string
Against an armoured Wrong to ring,
Brave the songs that arrows sing !
He weighs the finished flight :
" Live and die ; by and by
The sun kills dark ; I know not, I,
In what good fight mine arrows fly ! "

Or at the gray hour, weary grown,
When curfew o'er the wold is blown,
He sees, as in a magic glass,
Some lost and lonely mountain-pass ;
And lo ! a sign of deathful rout
The mocking vine has wound about,—
An earth-fixed arrow by a spring,
All greenly mossed, a mouldered thing ;
That stifled shaft no more shall sing !
He shakes his head in doubt.
" Laugh and sigh, live and die,—
The hand is blind : I know not, I,
In what lost pass mine arrows lie !
One to east, one to west,
Another for the eagle's breast,—
The archer and the wind know best ! "
The stars are in the sky ;
He lays his arrows by.

## IVO OF CHARTRES

Now may it please my lord, Louis the king,
  Lily of Christ and France ! riding his quest,
I, Bishop Ivo, saw a wondrous thing.

  There was no light of sun left in the west,
And slowly did the moon's new light increase.
  Heaven, without cloud, above the near hill's
    crest,
Lay passion-purple in a breathless peace.
  Stars started like still tears, in rapture shed,
Which without consciousness the lids release.

  All steadily, one little sparkle red,
Afar, drew close. A woman's form grew up
  Out of the dimness, tall, with queen-like head,
And in one hand was fire ; in one, a cup.
  Of aspect grave she was, with eyes upraised,
As one whose thoughts perpetually did sup
  At the Lord's table.

                While the cresset blazed,
Her I regarded. " Daughter, whither bent,
  And wherefore ? " As by speech of man amazed,
One moment her deep look to me she lent ;
  Then, in a voice of hymn-like, solemn fall,
Calm, as by rote, she spake out her intent :

" I in my cruse bear water, wherewithal
To quench the flames of Hell ; and with my fire
I Paradise would burn : that hence no small
Fear shall impel, and no mean hope shall hire,
Men to serve God as they have served of yore ;
But to His will shall set their whole desire,
For love, love, love alone, forevermore ! "

And " love, love, love," rang round her as she passed
From sight, with mystic murmurs o'er and o'er
Reverbed from hollow heaven, as from some vast,
Deep-coloured, vaulted, ocean-answering shell.
I, Ivo, had no power to ban or bless,
But was as one withholden by a spell.
Forward she fared in lofty loneliness,
Urged on by an imperious inward stress,
To waste fair Eden, and to drown fierce Hell.

## THE ACCOLADE

### A SONG FOR THE BEGINNING

I

Now filled was all the sum
Of serving years, and past, forever past,
All duties, all delights, of young esquires :
And to the altar and the hour at last,—
The hour, the altar, of his dear desires,—
Clear-shriven and whitely clad the youth was come.

II

Full many a squire was in that household bred
To arms and honour and sweet courtesy,
Who wore that sojourn's fragrant memory
As amulet in after-battles dread ;
And meeting in kings' houses joyously,
Or, wounded, in the sedge beside a lake,
Such men were bounden brothers, for the sake
Of the blade that knighted and the board that fed.

III

To eastward builded was the oratory :
There all the warm spring night,—while in the
wood

The buds were swelling in the brooding dark,
And dreaming of a lordlier dawn the lark,—
Paced to and fro the youth, and dreamed on glory,
And watched his arms. Great knights in mailéd
hood
On steeds of stone sat ranged along the aisle,
And frowned upon the aspirant: "Who is he
Would claim the name and join the company
Of slayers of Soldans swart and Dragons grim,
Not ignorant of wanded wizards' guile,
And deserts parched, and waters wide to swim?"
He halted at the challenge of the dead.
Anon, in twilight, fancy feigned a smile
To curve the carven lips, as though they said,
"Oh, welcome, brother, of whom the world hath
need!
Ere the recorded deed
We trembled, hoped, and doubted, even as thou."

And therewithal he lifted up his brow,
Uplift from hesitance and humble fear,
And saw how with the splendour of the sun
The glimmering oriel blossomed rosy-clear;
And lo, the Vigil of the Arms was done!

IV

Now, mass being said, before the priest he brought
That glittering prophecy, his untried sword.
In some mysterious forge the blade was wrought,
By shadowy arms of force that baffle thought

Wrought curiously in the dim under-world ;
And all along the sheath processions poured,
Thronged shapes of earth's weird morn
Ere yet the hammer of Thor was downward hurled:
Not less it had for hilt the Cross of Christ the Lord,
And must thereby in battle aye be borne.

V

Cool-sprinkled with the consecrated wave,
That blade was blessed, that it should strike to save ;
And next, pure hands of youth in hands of age
Were held upon the page
Of the illuminate missal, full of prayers,—
Rich fields, wherethrough the river of souls has rushed
Long, long, to have its passion held and hushed
In the breast of that calm sea whereto it fares :
And steadfastly the aspirant vow did plight
To bear the sword, or break it, for the Right ;
And living well his life, yet hold it light,—
Yea, for that sovereign sake a worthless thing.

VI

Thereon a troop of maids began to bring,
With flutter as of many-coloured doves,
The hauberk that right martially did ring,
And weight of linkéd gloves,
And helmet plumed, and spurs ablaze with gold.

Each gave in gracious wise her guiding word,
As bade or fresh caprice, or usance old :
As, *Ride thou swift by golden Honour spurred,*
Or, *Be thou faithful, fortunate, and bold.*
But scarce for his own heart the aspirant heard.

VII

And armed, all save the head,
He kneeled before his master gray and good.
Like some tall, noble, ancient ship he stood,
That once swept o'er the tide
With banners, and freight of heroes helmeted
For worthy war, and music breathing pride.
Now, the walled cities won,
And storms withstood, and all her story spun,
She towers in sand beside some sunny bay,
Whence in the silvery morn new barks go sailing gay.
So stately stood the Knight :
And with a mighty arm, and with a blade
Reconsecrate at fiery fonts of fight,
He on the bowed neck gave the accolade.

Yet kneeled the youth bewildered, for the stroke
Seemed severance sharp of kind companionships ;
And the strange pain of parting in him woke ;
And as at midnight when a branch down dips
By sudden-swaying tempest roughly stirred,
Some full-fledged nested bird,

Being shaken forth, though fain of late to fly,
Now flickers with weak wing and wistful cry,—
So flickered his desires
'Twixt knighthood, and delights and duties of esquires.
But even as with the morrow will uprise,
Assured by azure skies,
The bird, and dart, and swim in buoyant air,—
Uprose his soul, and found the future free and fair!

VIII

And girded with Farewell and with Godspeed
He sprang upon his steed.
And forth he fared along the broad bright way;
And mild was the young sun, and wild the breeze,
That seemed to blow to lands no eye had seen;
And Pentecost had kindled all the trees
To tremulous thin whispering flames of green,
And given to each a sacred word to say;
And wind-fine voices of the wind-borne birds
Were ever woven in among their words.
Soft-brooding o'er the hamlet where it lay,
The circling hills stood stoled with holy white,
For orchards brake to blossom in the night;
And all the morning was one blown blue flower,
And all the world was at its perfect hour.
So fared he gladly, and his spirit yearned
To do some deed fit for the deep new day.
And on the broad bright way his armour burned,

And showed him still, a shifting, waning star,
To sight that followed far.
Till, last, the fluctuant wood the flash did whelm,
That flood-like rolled in light and shadow o'er his helm.

IX

I know not more : nor if that helm did rust
In weed of some drear wilderness down-thrust,
Where in the watches lone
Heaven's host beheld him lying overthrown,
While God yet judged him victor, God whose laws
Note not the event of battle, but the cause.
I know not more : nor if the nodding prize
Of lustrous laurels ere that helm did crown,
While God yet judged him vanquished, God whose eyes
Saw how his Demon smote his Angel down
In some forgotten field and left him low.
Only the perfect hour is mine to know.

X

O you who forth along the highway ride,
Whose quest the whispering wood shall close around,
Be all adventure high that may betide,
And gentle all enchantments therein found !
I would my song were as a trumpet-sound

To nerve you and speed, and weld its notes with
power
To the remembrance of your perfect hour ;
To ring again and again, and to recall
With the might of music, all :
The prescience proud, the morning aspiration,
But most the unuttered vow, the inward consecra-
tion !

## THE ENCOUNTER

THERE'S a wood-way winding high,
Roofed far up with light-green flicker,
Save one midmost star of sky.
Underfoot 't is all pale brown
With the dead leaves matted down
One on other, thick and thicker;
Soft, but springing to the tread.
There a youth late met a maid
Running lightly,—oh, so fleetly!
"Whence art thou?" the herd-boy said.
Either side her long hair swayed,
Half a tress and half a braid,
Coloured like the soft dead leaf.
As she answered, laughing sweetly,
On she ran, as flies the swallow;
He could not choose but follow
Though it had been to his grief.

"I have come up from the valley,—
From the valley!" Once he caught her,
Swerving down a sidelong alley,
For a moment, by the hand.
"Tell me, tell me," he besought her,
"Sweetest, I would understand
Why so cold thy palm, that slips
From me like the shy cold minnow?
The wood is warm, and smells of fern,
And below the meadows burn.

Hard to catch and hard to win, oh !
Why are those brown finger tips
Crinkled as with lines of water ? "

Laughing while she featly footed,
With the herd-boy hasting after,
Sprang she on a trunk uprooted,
Clung she by a roping vine ;
Leaped behind a birch, and told,
Still eluding, through its fine,
Mocking, slender, leafy laughter,
Why her finger tips were cold :

" I went down to tease the brook,
With her fishes, there below ;
She comes dancing, thou must know,
And the bushes arch above her ;
But the seeking sunbeams look,
Dodging, through the wind-blown cover,
Find and kiss her into stars.
Silvery veins entwine and crook
Where a stone her tripping bars ;
There be smooth, clear sweeps, and swirls
Bubbling up crisp drops like pearls.
There I lie, along the rocks
Thick with greenest slippery moss,
And I have in hand a strip
Of gray, pliant, dappled bark ;
And I comb her liquid locks
Till her tangling currents cross ;
And I have delight to hark

To the chiding of her lip,
Taking on the talking stone
With each turn another tone.
Oh, to set her wavelets bickering!
Oh, to hear her laughter simple,
See her fret and flash and dimple!
Ha, ha, ha!" The woodland rang
With the rippling through the flickering.
At the birch the herd-boy sprang.

On a sudden something wound
Vine-like round his throbbing throat;
On a sudden something smote
Sharply on his longing lips,
Stung him as the birch bough whips:
Was it kiss or was it blow?
Never after could he know;
She was gone without a sound.

Never after could he see
In the wood or in the mead,
Or in any company
Of the rustic mortal maids,
Her with acorn-coloured braids;
Never came she to his need.
Never more the lad was merry,
Strayed apart, and learned to dream,
Feeding on the tart wild berry;
Murmuring words none understood,—
Words with music of the wood,
And with music of the stream.

# FLOWER FANCIES

## I

### A YELLOW PANSY

To the wall of the old green garden
A butterfly quivering came ;
His wings on the sombre lichens
Played like a yellow flame.

He looked at the gray geraniums,
And the sleepy four-o'-clocks ;
He looked at the low lanes bordered
With the glossy-growing box.

He longed for the peace and the silence,
And the shadows that lengthened there,
And his wee wild heart was weary
Of skimming the endless air.

And now in the old green garden,—
I know not how it came,—
A single pansy is blooming,
Bright as a yellow flame.

And whenever a gay gust passes,
It quivers as if with pain,
For the butterfly-soul that is in it
Longs for the winds again !

II

## THE SPRING BEAUTIES

THE Puritan Spring Beauties stood freshly clad
for church ;
A Thrush, white-breasted, o'er them sat singing
on his perch.
" Happy be ! for fair are ye ! " the gentle singer
told them,
But presently a buff-coat Bee came booming up to
scold them.
" Vanity, oh, vanity !
Young maids, beware of vanity ! "
Grumbled out the buff-coat Bee,
Half parson-like, half soldierly.

The sweet-faced maidens trembled, with pretty,
pinky blushes,
Convinced that it was wicked to listen to the
Thrushes ;
And when, that shady afternoon, I chanced that
way to pass,
They hung their little bonnets down and looked
into the grass.
All because the buff-coat Bee
Lectured them so solemnly :—
" Vanity, oh, vanity !
Young maids, beware of vanity ! "

III

## THISBE

THE garden within was shaded,
And guarded about from sight;
The fragrance flowed to the south wind,
The fountain leaped to the light.

And the street without was narrow,
And dusty, and hot, and mean;
But the bush that bore white roses,
She leaned to the fence between:

And softly she sought a crevice
In that barrier blank and tall,
And shyly she thrust out through it
Her loveliest bud of all.

And tender to touch, and gracious,
And pure as the moon's pure shine,
The full rose paled and was perfect,—
For whose eyes, for whose lips, but mine!

## A RHYME OF ROBIN PUCK

Howsoe'er the tale be spread,
Puck, the pranksome, is not dead.

At such tidings of mishap,
Any breeze-blown columbine
Would but toss a scarlet cap,—
Would but laugh, with shaken head,
" Trust it not, do not repine,
Puck, the pranksome, is not dead ! "
If you know not what to think,
Ask the tittering bobolink ;
Straightway shall the answer rise
Bubbling from his gleeful breast :
" Dead ? 'T is but his latest jest !
Robin Puck, the wild and wise,
Frolics on, and never dies ! "

Had we but the elfin sight,
On some pleasant summer night
We should see him and his crew
In the fields that gleam with dew ;
Had we but the elfin ear,
(Pointed sharply like a leaf,)
In the meadows we should hear
Fairy pipings, fine and brief,
Shrilled through throats of tiniest flowers ;
Would that subtler sense were ours !

Tricksy Puck ! I shall not tell
How it is I know him well.
Swift yet clumsy, plump yet wee,
Brown as hazel-nut is he ;
And from either temple springs
Such a waving, hair-like horn
As by butterflies is worn ;
Glassy-clear his glistening wings,
Like the small green-bodied flies'
In the birch-woods ; and his eyes,
Set aslant, as blackly shine
As the myriad globes wherein
The wild blackberry keeps her wine ;
And his voice is piercing thin,
But he changes that at will—
Mocking rogue !—with birdlike skill.
How it is I must not tell,
But you see I know him well.

Ah ! with some rare, secret spell
Should we bathe in moonlit dew
Eyes that this world's book have read,
We should see him and his crew
In the dreamy summer dell :
For, howe'er the tale be spread,
Puck, the pranksome, is not dead !

## A LULLABY

Now while rest the happy herds,
And in folds the fleecy sheep,
All the boughs are full of birds,
Crowding, sound asleep.
*Sleep, sleep, sleep,*
*Under the fair, fair flocks of stars*
*That roam all night and know no bars,*
*Sleep, sweet, sleep!*

Now if we an Owl could ride,—
Yes, an Owl with yellow eyes,
Globy lanterns, clear and wide,
Flaming while he flies,—

We should see the pretty things,
Pretty little sleepy souls!
All their heads beneath their wings,
Blind with sleep as moles!
*Sleep, sleep, sleep,*
*Under the wild, winged winds that fly*
*All night long across the sky,*
*Sleep, sweet, sleep!*

## THE PORTRAIT OF THE PRINCESS

TINY, stately maid of Spain,
With your formal fan and train!
Strange the spell the painter cast,
Strong to make you live and last!
Some one, Sweet, who bore your name,
Changed and grew, as people do;
Had adventures gay or tragic;
Died, one day—yet here are you,
By the wand-like brush's magic
Held among us, just the same!
On your brow the same soft curls,
On your wrist the changeless pearls,
In the gems the moveless gleams,
In your eyes the selfsame dreams;
What a fairy-tale it seems!

Oh, that he who saw you thus,—
Seized and sent you down to us,
On his canvas limned with skill
Tender curves of throat and cheek,—
Might have added one thing still,
Made the grave lips ope and speak!
For I fain had heard it told
What the world was like around you,
That old world of cloth-of-gold

Where the cunning painter found you.
Tell me how your time was spent:
Had you any playmates then,
Or were all who came and went
Ceremonious dames and men?
Had you some tall hound to pet—
Some caged bird, with eyes of jet?
As you moved, a soul apart,
Through that world of plume and glove,
Could your precious little heart
Fix on anything to love?
—Sober, silent you remain,
Tiny, stately maid of Spain!

## LEPAGE'S JOAN OF ARC

Once, it may be, the soft gray skies were dear,
The clouds above in crowds, like sheep below,
The bending of each kindly wrinkled tree ;
Or blossoms at the birth-time of the year,
Or lambs unweaned, or water in still flow,
In whose brown glass a girl her face might see.

Such days are gone, and strange things come instead ;
For she has looked on other faces white,
Pale bloom of fear, before war's whirlwind blown ;
Has stooped, ah Heaven ! in some low sheltering shed
To tend dark wounds, the leaping arrow's bite,
While the cold death that hovered seemed her own.

And in her hurt heart, o'er some grizzled head,
The mother that shall never be has yearned ;
And love's fine voice, she else shall never hear,
Came to her as the call of saints long dead ;
And straightway all the passion in her burned,
One altar-flame that hourly waxes clear.

Hence goes she ever in a glimmering dream,
And very oft will sudden stand at gaze,
With blue, dim eyes that still not seem to see :
For now the well-known ways with visions teem ;
Unfelt is toil, and summer one green daze,
Till that the king be crowned, and France be free !

## A NOCTURNE OF RUBINSTEIN

### I

WHAT now remains, what now remains but night?
Night hopeless, since the moon is in her grave!

Late came a glorious light
In one wide flood on spire and field and wave.
It found a flowing way
To secret places where the dead leaves lay;
It won the half-hid stream
To shy remembrance of her morning gleam;
Then on the sky's sharp shore
Rolled back, a fading tide, and was no more.
No more on spire and ivied window bright!
No more on field and wave!

*What now remains, what now remains but night?*
*Night hopeless, since the moon is in her grave!*

### II

Dumb waits the dim, broad land,
Like one who hears, yet cannot understand,
Tidings of grief to come.
The woods and waters, with the winds, are dumb.

But now a breeze has found
Sorrowful voice, and sobs along the ground :
" Oh, the lost light, the last, the best lost light !
No more on field and wave ! "

*What now remains, what now remains but night ?*
*Night hopeless, since the moon is in her grave !*

III

Hark, how the wind outswells,
Tempting the wood's dark heart till he rebels,
And, shaking his black hair,
Lifts up a cry of passion and despair !
The groaning branches chafe
Till scarce the small, hushed singing-birds are safe,
Tossed rocking in the nest,
Like gentle memories in a stormy breast.
A shudder, as good angels passed in flight,
Thrills over field and wave.

*What now remains, what now remains but night ?*
*Night lawless, while the moon is in her grave !*

IV

There falls a mighty hush :
And forth from far recesses fern-scents rush,
Faint as a waft from years
Long past ; they touch in heaven the springs of tears.
In great drops, slow and warm,
Breaks all at once the spirit of the storm.

*What now remains, what now remains but night?*
*Night grieving, while the moon is in her grave!*

V

Behold! the rain is over: on the wave
A new, a flashing light!
Lo, she arises calm,
The pale, the patient moon, and pours like balm
Through the wet wood's wrecked aisle
Her own unutterably tender smile!

There is no calm like that when storm is done;
There is no pleasure keen as pain's release;
There is no joy that lies so deep as peace,
No peace so deep as that by struggle won.

*Naught now remains, naught now remains but night—*
*Night peaceful, with the moon on field and wave!*

## A MEMORY OF ELLEN TERRY'S BEATRICE

A WIND of spring that whirls the feignéd snows
  Of blossom-petals in the face, and flees :
  Elusive, made of mirthful mockeries,
Yet tender with the prescience of the rose ;
A strain desired, that through the memory goes,
  Too subtle-slender for the voice to seize ;
  A flame dissembled, only lit to tease,
Whose touch were half a kiss, if one but knows.

She shows by Leonato's dove-like daughter
  A falcon, by a prince to be possessed,
    Gay-graced with bells that ever chiming are ;
In azure of the bright Sicilian water,
  A billow that has rapt into its breast
    The swayed reflection of a dancing star !

## EMELIE

*O chaste goddesse of the wodes grene,*
*I am (thou wost) yet of thy compagnie,*
*A mayde, and love hunting and venerie,*
*And for to walken in the wodes wilde.*

THE KNIGHTES TALE.

SHE greets the lily on the stalk ;
  She shakes the soft hair from her brows ;
She wavers down the garden walk
  Beneath the bloomy boughs.
She is the slenderest of maids ;
  Her fair face strikes you like a star ;
The great stone tower her pathway shades—
  The prison where the Princes are.
    *Across the dewy pleasance falls,*
      *All in the clear May morning light,*
    *The shadow of those evil walls*
      *That look so black by night.*

She is so glad, so wild a thing,
  Her heart sings like the lark all day ;
The unhooded falcon on the wing
  Is not more freely gay.
In sun and wind doth she rejoice,
  And blithely drinks the airy blue,
Yet loves the solemn pines that voice
  The grief she never knew.

In silence of the woods apart
  Her sure swift step the Dryads know ;
Full oft she speeds the bounding hart,
  And draws the bending bow.
Fine gleams across her spirit dart,
  And never living soul, saith she,
Could make her choose for aye to lose
  Her own sweet company.

But sometimes, when the moon is bright,
  So bright it almost drowns the stars,
She thinks how some have lost delight
  Behind the prison bars.
It makes her sad a little space,
  And casts a shadow on her look,
As branches in a woody place
  Do flicker on a brook.

Last night she had a dream of men,
  Dark faces strange with keen desire ;
She heard the blaring trumpet then,
  She saw the shields strike fire.
The pomp of plumes, the crack of spears,
  Beyond her happy circle lie :
Thank Heaven ! she has but eighteen years,
  And loves the daisies and the sky.
*And yet across her garden falls,*
  *All in the clear May morning light,*
*The shadow of the prison walls*
  *That look so black by night.*

## ELSINORE

It is strange in Elsinore
  Since the day King Hamlet died.

All the hearty sports of yore,
  Sledge and skate, are laid aside ;
Stilled the ancient mirth that rang,
  Boisterous, down the fire-lit halls ;
They forgot, at Yule, to hang
  Berried holly on the walls.
Claudius lets the mead still flow
  For the blue-eyed thanes that love it ;
  But they bend their brows above it,
And forever, to and fro,
Round the board dull murmurs go :
    " It is strange in Elsinore
      Since the day King Hamlet died."

And a swarm of courtiers flit,
  New in slashed and satined trim,
With their freshly-fashioned wit
  And their littleness of limb,—
Flit about the stairways wide,
  Till the pale Prince Hamlet smiles,
As he walks, at twilight tide,
  Through the galleries and the aisles.

For to him the castle seems—
  This old castle, Elsinore—
Like a thing built up of dreams ;
  And the king's a mask, no more ;
And the courtiers seem but flights
  Of the painted butterflies ;
And the arras, wrought with fights,
  Grows alive before his eyes.
Lo, its giant shapes of Danes,
  As without a wind it waves,
Live more nobly than his thanes,
  Sullen carpers, ale-fed slaves !

In the flickering of the fires,
  Through his sleep at night there pass
Gay conceits and young desires—
  Faces out of memory's glass,
Fragments of the actor's art,
  Student's pleasures, college broils,
Poesies that caught his heart,
  Chances with the fencing foils ;
Then he listens oftentimes
  With his boyhood's simple glee,
To dead Yorick's quips and rhymes,
  Leaning on his father's knee.
To that mighty hand he clings,
  Tender love that stern face charms ;
All at once the casement rings
  As with strength of angry arms.
From the couch he lifts his head,
  With a shudder and a start ;

All the fires are embers red,
  And a weight is on his heart.

It is strange in Elsinore :
  Sure some marvel cometh soon !
  Underneath the icy moon
Footsteps pat the icy floor ;
Voices haunt the midnights bleak,
  When the wind goes singing keen ;
And the hound, once kept so sleek,
  Slinks and whimpers and grows lean ;
And the shivering sentinels,
  Timorous, on their lonesome round,
Starting count the swinging bells,
  Starting at the hollow sound ;
And the pine-trees chafe and roar,
  Though the snow would keep them still.
  In the state there's somewhat ill ;
It is strange in Elsinore.

## FIAMMETTA

In dream I passed the Gate that bears in black,
" Here lies dead Hope." The ineffable gold sky
I saw between the pillars, looking back,
And one young cloud, that slowly wandered by
As though it wondered. Downward, all was dark,
And through the dark I heard the sad souls cry.

Anon, although alone, I whispered, " Hark !
What lifeless laughter, crackling thorny-thin ? "
Then grew to sight what first I failed to mark
When from the accustomed light I entered in,—
A group that pleasured by that barren wall
As Hell some delicate-blossomed close had been :
One, gesturing, spake ; the rest attended all.
" Declare, ye circled shades, your home on earth !
Declare the names your kindred used to call ! "
I cried, much marvelling at their mirthless mirth.
A woman wavered to the space half lit
By that lost sky : " In Florence had we birth ;
That company thou seest, who chose to sit
Ten sunny days, a fountain's flight beside,
Scattering the rose, and weaving tales of wit,
What time by Arno many cursing died.
Yes, Fiammetta am I. *Thou little flame,*
(Thus the grave Angel, to this Gate my guide,)

*With what vain flickering hast thou proved thy name!*
*Hast given to no chilled spirit aught of cheer ;*
*Shalt now be fed and kept alight with shame,*
*And flicker evermore."*

Then did appear
Her set smile's irony, and I discerned
Through those her long dark languid eyes, right clear
How far below her soul forever burned.
Her sleeves of scarlet hung in many a shred ;
Her silver chains were all to tarnish turned,
And crisped were the laurels on her head.
" Alas ! why camest thou to this place of pain,—
Why, Pampinea, Lauretta, why ? " I said,
" Since many souls that bore the self-same stain
Tread the last ledge of Purgatory mount,
And trust, made pure, sweet Paradise to gain,
Where sings the grove, where flows the twofold fount.
Those, angels aid on fair green rustling wings ;
Why then are these thus held to hard account ? "

" Not such, O questioner, was the sin that brings
Us hither ; but on earth so weak a part
We chose, that now no part in heavenly things
Is granted us, nor yet will Hell's deep heart
Receive us, but in this dim borderland
We dwell, and follow here our hollow art
Of weaving tales, and are in semblance gay,
Moved by a might we never may withstand.

To our own dear delights we turned away;
Forgot the city full of tears, forgot
The tolling bells, abandoned even to pray;
But couched in some delectable safe spot
Saw breezy olives whiten like the sea,
And babbled, fools, of Love, and knew him not,
Who else had set us from the grim Gate free,
Being giant-strong to save the souls of men.
But Hate came to us, richly masked, and we
Esteemed him Love; and now among us ten
Sits very Hate. The life we prized is ours
For aye! Yet not so far, I deem, this den
From sound of suffering as our fields of flowers."
With that weird smile, she turned as if to go.
Loud groaned the lurid City, the sullen fen
Of Styx, and all that grief that lies below.
"Farewell," I sighed, "Fiammetta!" But she,
"Not so!
What life is thine? Perchance we meet again!"

## MARINA SINGS

(*Pericles*, Act V. Scene 1)

THIS is the song Marina sang
  To forlorn Pericles :
Silver the young voice rang.
  The gray beard blew about his knees,
And the hair of his bowed head, like a veil,
Fell over his cheeks and blent with it :
  He knew not anything.
  Above him the Tyrian fold
Of the curtain billowed, fringed with gold,
  As might beseem a king.
Sunset was rose on every sail
That did along the far sea flit,
And rose on the cedarn deck
Of the ship that at anchor swayed ;
And the harbour was golden-lit.
  He lifted not his neck
At the coming of the maid.
She swept him with her eyes,
As though some tender wing
Just touched a bleaching wreck
  In sheeted sand that lies ;
  Then she began to sing.

THE SONG

Hush, ah hush ! the sea is kind !
Lullaby is in the wind ;
Grief the babe forgets to weep,
Lapped and spelled and laid to sleep :
His lip is wet with the milk of the spray ;
He shall not wake till another day.
  Ah hush ! the sea is kind !

Who can tell, ah who can tell,
The cradling nurse's croonèd spell ?
While the slumber-web she weaves
Never nursling stirs or grieves :
The tears that drowned his sweet eye-beams
Are turned to mists of rainbow dreams.
  Ah hush ! she charms us well !

" All thy hurts I balm and bind ;
All thy heart's loves thou shalt find ! "
Yea, this she murmurs, best of all :
" It was not loss that did befall !
All thy joys are put away ;
They shall be thine another day ! "
  Ah hush ! the sea is kind !

She sang ; she trembled like a lyre ;
Her pure eyes burned with azure fire ;
About her lucent brow the hair
Played like light flames divine ones wear :
  The maid was very fair.

But when she saw he gave no heed,—
Close-mantled up in ancient pain
  As in some sad-wound weed,
  Dumb as a shape of stone,
  Being years past all moan,—
  She tried no other strain,
But softly spake : " Most royal sir ! "
He raised his head and looked at her.
So might a castaway, half dead,
  Lift up his haggard head,
Waked by the swirl of sudden rain,
  A cool, unhoped-for grace,
  Against his tearless face :
And see, with happy-crazèd mind,
Upon his raft a Bright One stand,—
His love of youth, her grave long left behind
  In some sweet-watered land.

## THE KING'S DIAMOND

*This diamond he greets your wife withal*
*By the name of most kind hostess.*
MACBETH, Act II. Sc. 1.

DUNCAN the King,—Heaven rest his bier !—
Had a diamond icy-clear ;
Clear as ice and fierce as flame,—
I wot not whence he had the same.
Its fellow was not in the land.
It shot keen shafts of every hue
On the old king's trembling hand
Where the veins were large and blue.
A jewel of price was that indeed,
Fit to buy a prince's life ;
A royal gift for the lady wife
Of a kinsman bold and true
Who had served the king at need.
Who was he, but the Red Macbeth
That wrought the false Macdonwald's death,
And drave the sea-wolf in dismay,
Sweyn the king of Norroway ?
Being guest to that great thane,
Ere his limbs on couch had lain,
Duncan sent that frozen flame
To Lady Gruach, the gracious dame.
(Clear as ice was the lady's fame,
A flawless jewel indeed !)

Duncan the king at Colmkill sleeps,
So sound he will not turn or moan ;
His slumber-draught was deep, I ween,
Bitter-spiced with daggers keen.
It is the Red Macbeth that keeps
Stern state upon the throne,
With Gruach, his kind queen.
(" Most kind," the old King Duncan said,
Before he lay in his last bed.)

The Lady Gruach wears the crown,
She wears the glistering golden gown,
But yet she has not worn the ring
That was the guerdon of the king.
In the dark the diamond lies,
Seen of no vassal's eyes.

Nor any vassal's tongue can tell
How,—when the spying Day is sped
And sleeps with the safe dead ;
When Gruach loosens her long hair
Midnight-black on her shoulders bare,
And sinks to the comfort of despair ;
At the witches' hour, when the shadows swell
As the swinging cressets flare,
And the small swart crickets harp and harp
On the tune remembered, torturing-sharp,
And the sobbing owlets wake,—
The diamond in the dark
Draws, draws her, like the spark
In the head of a deadly snake.

Then will she sit, and dully stare
On the cold diamond's serpent-glare ;
Her lip is fallen, she does not stir,
Her life is sucked into the gem ;
It is as though the Powers malign
Had made with mystery in the mine
A thing to be like the soul of her :
It was a jest to them !
All the light upgathered they
That might have been a sunshine day,
Broadcast blessing and heavenly boon,
Peace of even and power of noon ;
Seized the rays with a spell unknown,
Forced them into a core of fire
Like the glede of a covetous desire,
Shut them fast in the heart of a stone.
And hard, and harder than the sword,
They made the crystal, fiery-cored ;
On steel that oft had steel withstood
Might it grave the word it would.
A gem of beauty and of bale,
A prisoned force in narrow pale,
Evil-perfect, pure of good !
—So will she sit, till naked Morn
Peers at the world with visage white
Like a sleeper roused in fright,
Aghast and most forlorn.

What of the end ? since end must be.
She knows a skilled artificer,
And he shall set in a dagger's haft

The thing that is like the soul of her.
When first she thought thereon, she laughed,
And then she shuddered fearfully.
Ah, what if Heaven no end will grant,
Resolved in any heats of wrath,
To that which for its symbol hath
The unsubduable adamant?
Ah, what if like a falling jewel
The soul whose light was mocking-cruel,
Through gulfs of loss unplummeted
Should fall, and fall, forevermore,
Fire of torment at its core?
Oh, horrible and leaden dread!
The grace of God blot out our sins!
—The women knock at the chamber door,
The queen starts up, the day begins.

## "AS THE CROW FLIES"

Buccaneer with blackest sails,
  Steering home by compass true,
Now that all the rich West pales
  From its ingot-hue!

Would that compass in thy breast
  Thou couldst lend, for guiding me
Where my Hope hath made her nest—
  In how far a tree!

Swerving not, nor stooping low,
  To that dear, that distant mark
Could I undiverted go,
  What were coming dark?

—Careless of the twilight ground,
  O'er the wood and o'er the stream
Still he sails, with hollow sound
  Strange, as in a dream!

## THE WAYFARERS

I

YOUNG man with the keen blue eyes,
Clear and bold!
Why, as thou dost fare,
With so searching air,
Scannest thou each face thou dost behold,
Each small flower, faint-coloured like the skies,
Growing by the way? Why gazest thou
O'er the round hill's brow?

"Ah, in every bearded face,
Looking deep,
My heart's friend seek I!
In each maiden shy
My heart's dearest, dreamed upon in sleep;
And in each fair flower a hope I trace;
And the hill may hide the flashing sea
That doth call to me!"

II

Old man with the pale blue eyes,
Mild and clear!
Why, as thou dost fare,
With that pondering air

Into passing faces dost thou peer?
Why dost pause, where dim like autumn skies
Starry asters grow? Why gazest thou
O'er the round hill's brow?

"Ah, from each gray-bearded face
Would I know
What that heart hath found;
And in youths that bound
See a youth who vanished long ago!
In each flower a memory can I trace;
O'er the hill the green, still place may be
That doth wait for me!"

## A ROSE

Too-perfect Rose, thy heavy breath has power
To wake a dim, an unexplained regret:
Art body to the soul of some deep hour
That all my seasons have not yielded yet?

But if it be so—Hour, too-perfect Hour,
Ah, blow not full, though all the yearning days
Should tremble bud-like, since the wind must shower
Thine unreturning grace along the ways!

## THE INN OF THE STAR

WHEN the Old Year plods down
  Toward the end of the hill,
Where the white little town
  Lies asleep, wonder-still,
Then he mends his dull pace,
  For a ray, streaming far,
Strikes a gleam on his face
  From the Inn of the Star.

Then the staff is set by,
  And the shoon from his feet,
And the burden let lie,
  And he sitteth at meat;
Old jests round the board,
  Old songs round the blaze,
While the faint bells accord
  Like the souls of old days.

In the sweet bed of peace
  He shall sleep for a night,
And faith, like a fleece,
  Lap him kindly and light;
Then the wind, crooning wild,
  Mystic music shall seem,
And the brow of the Child
  Be a light through his dream.

And we, too, follow down
The long slope of the hill :
See, the white little town,
Where it shines, wonder-still !
Be our hopes quenched or bright,
Be our griefs what they are,
We shall sojourn a night
At the Inn of the Star.

# POSIES

*—Is this . . . the posy of a ring?*—HAMLET.

## I

### FRIENDSHIP

I WERE not worth you, could I long for you ;
  But should you come, you would find me ready.
  The lamp is lighted, the flame is steady :
Over the strait I toss this song for you !

## II

### ROSE-RENT

LIFE ! lordly giver and gay !
  I, for this manor of Time,
Lightly and lovingly pay
  Rent with the rose of a rhyme.

## III

### DESIRE OF FAME

O UNAPPROACHABLE glories of the night !
  You type not my desire : enough for me
  The vanished meteor's immortality,
Brief memory of a moment touched with light.

## TO-DAY

Voice, with what emulous fire thou singest free
hearts of old fashion,
English scorners of Spain, sweeping the blue
sea-way,
Sing me the daring of life for life, the magnanimous
passion
Of man for man in the mean populous streets of
To-day!

Hand, with what colour and power thou couldst
show, in the ring hot-sanded,
Brown Bestiarius holding the lean tawn tiger at
bay,
Paint me the wrestle of Toil with the wild-beast
Want, bare-handed;
Shadow me forth a soul steadily facing To-day!

## THE BALLAD OF CALNAN'S CHRISTMAS

WHEN you hear the fire-gongs beat fierce along the startled street,
See the great-limbed horses bound, and the gleaming engine sway,
And the driver in his place, with his fixed, heroic face,
Say a prayer for Calnan's sake—he that died on Christmas day!

Cling! Cling! Each to his station!
Clang! Clang! Quick to clear the way!
(Christ keep the soldiers of salvation,
Fighting nameless battles in the war of every day!)

In the morning, blue and mild, of the Mother and the Child,
While the blessed bells were calling, thrilled the summons through the wire;
In the morning, blue and mild, for a woman and a child
Died a man of gentle will, plunging on to fight the fire.

Ring, swing, bells in the steeple!
Ring the Child and ring the Star, as sweetly as ye may!

Ring, swing, bells, to tell the people
God's goodwill to earthly men, the men of every day!

"Thirty-four" swung out agleam, with her mighty, bounding team;
Horses' honour pricked them on, and they leaped as at a goad;
Jimmy Calnan in his place, with his clean-cut Irish face,
Iron hands upon the reins, eyes astrain upon the road.

Clang! Clang! Quick to clear the way!
(Sweetly rang, above the clang, the bells of Christmas day.)

Tearing, plunging through the din, scarce a man can hold them in;
None on earth could pull them short: Mary Mother, guard from harm
Yonder woman straight ahead, stony-still with sudden dread,
And the little woman-child, with her waxen child in arm!

Oh, God's calls, how swift they are! Oh, the Cross that hides the Star!
Oh, the fire-gong beating fierce through the bells of Christmas day!

Just a second there to choose, and a life to keep or lose—
To the curb he swung the horses, and he flung his life away!

Ring, swing, bells in the steeple!
Ring the Star and ring the Cross, for Star and Cross are one!
Ring, swing, bells, to tell the people
God is pleased with manly men, and deeds that they have done!

# SONNETS

## THE IMMORTAL WORD

One soiled and shamed and foiled in this world's fight,
Deserter from the host of God, that here
Still darkly struggles,—waked from death in fear,
And strove to screen his forehead from the white
And blinding glory of the awful Light,
The revelation and reproach austere.
Then with strong hand outstretched a Shape drew near,
Bright-browed, majestic, armoured like a knight.

"Great Angel, servant of the Highest, why
Stoop'st thou to me?" although his lips were mute,
His eyes inquired. The Shining One replied:
"Thy Book, thy birth, life of thy life am I,
Son of thy soul, thy youth's forgotten fruit.
We two go up to judgment side by side."

## THE TORCH-RACE

BRAVE racer, who hast sped the living light
With throat outstretched and every nerve astrain,
Now on thy left hand labours gray-faced Pain,
And Death hangs close behind thee on the right.
Soon flag the flying feet, soon fails the sight,
With every pulse the gaunt pursuers gain ;
And all thy splendour of strong life must wane
And set into the mystery of night.

Yet fear not, though in falling, blindness hide
Whose hand shall snatch, before it sears the sod,
The light thy lessening grasp no more controls :
Truth's rescuer, Truth shall instantly provide :
This is the torch-race game, that noblest souls
Play on through time beneath the eyes of God.

## RETROSPECT

" BACKWARD," he said, " dear heart, I like to look
To those half-spring, half-winter days, when first
We drew together, ere the leaf-buds burst.
Sunbeams were silver yet, keen gusts yet shook
The boughs. Have you remembered that kind book
That for our sake Galeotto's part rehearsed,
(The friend of lovers,—this time blessed, not cursed !)
And that best hour, when reading we forsook ? "

She, listening, wore the smile a mother wears
At childish fancies needless to control ;
Yet felt a fine, hid pain with pleasure blend.
Better it seemed to think that love of theirs,
Native as breath, eternal as the soul,
Knew no beginning, could not have an end.

## THE CONTRAST

He loved her ; having felt his love begin
With that first look,—as lover oft avers.
He made pale flowers his pleading ministers,
Impressed sweet music, drew the springtime in
To serve his suit ; but when he could not win,
Forgot her face and those gray eyes of hers ;
And at her name his pulse no longer stirs,
And life goes on as though she had not been.

She never loved him ; but she loved Love so,
So reverenced Love, that all her being shook
At his demand whose entrance she denied.
Her thoughts of him such tender colour took
As western skies that keep the afterglow.
The words he spoke were with her till she died.

## TRIUMPH

This windy sunlit morning after rain,
The wet bright laurel laughs with beckoning gleam
In the blown wood, whence breaks the wild white
stream
Rushing and flashing, glorying in its gain ;
Nor swerves nor parts, but with a swift disdain
O'erleaps the boulders lying in long dream,
Lapped in cold moss ; and in its joy doth seem
A wood-born creature bursting from a chain.

And " Triumph, triumph, triumph ! " is its hoarse
Fierce-whispered word. O fond, and dost not know
Thy triumph on another wise must be,—
To render all the tribute of thy force,
And lose thy little being in the flow
Of the unvaunting river toward the sea !

## A MYSTERY

THAT sunless day no living shadow swept
Across the hills, fleet shadow chasing light,
Twin of the sailing cloud : but mists wool-white,
Slow-stealing mists, on those heaved shoulders crept,
And wrought about the strong hills while they slept
In witches' wise, and rapt their forms from sight.
Dreams were they ; less than dream, the noblest height
And farthest ; and the chilly woodland wept.

A sunless day and sad : yet all the while
Within the grave green twilight of the wood,
Inscrutable, immutable, apart,
Hearkening the brook, whose song she understood,
The secret birch-tree kept her silver smile,
Strange as the peace that gleams at sorrow's heart.

## THE COMMON STREET

THE common street climbed up against the sky,
Gray meeting gray; and wearily to and fro
I saw the patient, common people go,
Each with his sordid burden trudging by.
And the rain dropped; there was not any sigh
Or stir of a live wind; dull, dull and slow
All motion; as a tale told long ago
The faded world; and creeping night drew nigh.

Then burst the sunset, flooding far and fleet,
Leavening the whole of life with magic leaven.
Suddenly down the long wet glistening hill
Pure splendour poured—and lo! the common street,
A golden highway into golden heaven,
With the dark shapes of men ascending still.

## ABRAHAM LINCOLN

*February* 12, 1909

I

THE centuries pass, yea as a dream they pass.
Nations and races, with all that they have sown,
Sink as the prairie-grass,
By the invisible scythe silently mown.
The wind breathes over them, and the place thereof
Knows them no more.
But the unsounded sky still broods above,
Blue ocean without shore,
Eternal in its breadth and depth and fire of love.
So the o'erbrooding Soul, purely ablaze,
Full-flooded with the light of God,
Outlasts Man's body and all his works and ways,
Outlasts this little earth whereon he trod.

II

We come not, then, to praise
That which transcends our praises, but to crave
The light of one great soul, kind as the sky,
Upon these later days,—
Not like the simpler time gone by,
But set with snares of sense and ease,

And crowded with poor phantom flatteries
That serve us, and enslave.
We come, forgetting for a while
Our million-peopled cities, pile on pile
Upsoaring starry-windowed in the night
To perilous Babel-height;
We come, forgetting all our new-found powers,
The magic of the mastery that is ours,
The shoes of swiftness we may lightly wear,
And that fresh-captived Ariel of the air,
All, all that makes Man's face to shine
With pride of conquest, flushing him as wine,—
We come, forgetting all, a little while
To look in Lincoln's eyes,
So loving-sad, so kindly-wise;
To stand, as judged, before his patient smile;
Until his large mould shames us, and we know
We are as children, yet have hope to grow,
Since this may be the stature of a man.

III

Strangely his life began,
Rough-cradled in the savage wood.
Haply our foolish softness grieves
O'er much that he found good,
The hut of logs, the bed of leaves.
By the faint candle, or the winter's fire,
He groped to his desire,
The long, lean, sallow, knowledge-hungry lad,
Deerskin or homespun clad.

Slow-stumbling upward, in good time he grew
To that just man his little city knew,
His plain, persuasive speech
Shaped by an instinct none could ever teach,
Savouring of honest earth, and sharp with wilding jest.
Then came his country's call.
Humble and hesitant, in doubt and dread,
And stooping that tall head
Black-ruffled like the eagle's crest,
He passed up to the highest place of all.

IV

Ah, who shall tell the tale of those wild years,
Of pride and grief, of blood and tears?
The horror and the splendour and the sorrow,
The marching-songs of midnight, the sick fears
Of every fateful morrow?
Sometimes a waft of song, a random strain,
Suddenly lifts a curtain in the brain:
Some sweet old homesick soldier-ballad, one
Beloved of many a sunburnt longing son
Of Michigan or Maine,
Or that light laughing tune wherewith the South
Fifed her boy-soldiers blithe to the cannon's mouth,—
Suddenly all is real once more,
The hoping, the despairing,
The pity and the passion and the daring,
And all the agony of the Brother-War!

V

Each bore his burden : but he all burdens bore,
Whose sad heart folded all the sufferers in ;
While with a master's steady hand he played,
Mournful but undismayed,
That giant game where it was pain to win.
Ah, pain to win, but double death to lose !
He saw the end, he knew the thing at stake
Was Manhood's captain-jewel : he could not choose
But play the grim game out, though that great heart should break.
He smiled, as he had need
To keep him sane :
Sad Lincoln laughed ! on mountain-side or plain
Not any soldier did a braver deed.

VI

Last, all his duty done,—
All the dark bondmen freed,
The long-sought leader found, the piteous victory won,—
Arrived for him one hour of April sun
Wherein he breathed free as the forest again,
In glad goodwill to men
Nursing some vast forgiveness in his mind.
Then—all turned blank and blind.
Dare we remember the tragic lilac-time
Crimsoned with that mad crime ?
Nay, hush ! Ye have heard how sacrifice must close
The supreme service ; 'tis the way God chose.

VII

Ah, haply we, the native-born,
And sprung of grandsires native too,
Proud of soul this stately morn
Would with his fame one race, one land indue ;
Would claim him ours, and ours alone,
Flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone,
Inseparably our own !
Ours by the English name,
And that old England whence his forebears came,
And that dear English of his tongue and pen ;
Mightier successor of our most mighty men ;
Ours, by his birth beneath our western sky,
Ours, by the flag he died to save,
Ours, by the home-fields of his labour, and by
The home-earth of his grave !

VIII

But hark ! as if some league-long barrier broke
To let wide waters in tumultuously,
I hear the voices of the outland folk
From sea to sea—yea, rolling over-sea :
" You shall not limit his large glory thus,
You shall not mete his greatness with a span !
This man belongs to us,
Gentile and Jew, Teuton and Celt and Russ
And whatso else we be !
This man belongs to Man !
And never, till a flood of love efface

The hard distrusts that sever race from race,
Comes his true jubilee!
Never, till all the wars,
Yea, even the noble wars that strive to peace,
With all the thunder of all the drums shall cease,
And all the booming guns on all the brother-shores;
Never, till that worst strife of every day,
More bitter-sordid than the clash of steel,
By some new solving word our lips may learn to say,
Be wholly done away,
Deep-drowned in brotherhood, quenched in the common weal,
Ah, never, till every spirit shall stand up free,
Comes the great Liberator's jubilee!"

THE
TEMPLE PRESS
LETCHWORTH
ENGLAND

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Cone, Helen Gray
A chant of love for England

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